

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 742

DEPT PLEASE PASS ARAB CAPITALS AND LONDON, MOSCOW, PARIS, TEHRAN,
AND TEL AVIV FOR INFO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, IZ, US

SUBJECT: SADDAM HUSSEIN'S DOMESTIC OPPOSITION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE
FOR U.S.

REF: BAGHDAD 501

1. SUMMARY: USINT'S ASSESSMENT OF THE IRAQI REGIME AFTER THE
RAPPROCHEMENT WITH IRAN AND END OF THE TURKISH WAR (REFTEL)
EMPHASIZED THE DOMINANT POSITION OF SADDAM HUSSEIN, THE RELATIVE
IMPROVEMENT IN THE WESTERN POSITION VIS-A-VIS THE SOVIETS, AND THE
LESSENING OF BAATH IDEOLOGICAL WARFARE AGAINST FELLOW ARABS. TWO
MONTHS LATER, THOSE CONCLUSIONS REMAIN VALID, BUT IT NOW SEEMS
CLEAR THAT SADDAM'S POLICIES HAVE PROVOKED MORE CRITICISM AND
POTENTIAL OPPOSITION THAN HE ANTICIPATED. HE APPEARS TO BE DEALING
WITH IT BY TAKING A TEMPORARY STEP BACKWARDS TO REFURBISH IRAQ'S
REVOLUTIONARY IMAGE AND ASSURE THAT HIS MILITANT FOLLOWERS ARE NOT
ATTRACTED ELSEWHERE. IN THIS SITUATION, CONTINUING U.S. PATIENCE
AND A CAPABILITY TO SEPARATE THE SUBSTANCE OF IRAQ'S POLICIES FROM
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ITS RHETORIC IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED. END SUMMARY.

2. MFA DIRGEN OF POLITICAL AFFAIRS IBRAHIM AL-WALI TOLD ME IN CONFIDENCE ON JULY 3 THAT GOI HAD BEEN SOUNDLY CRITICIZED BY "COMMUNISTS AND OTHERS" FOR "HYPRICSY" OF EXPANDING ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH U.S. AND FOR RECEIVING DAVID ROCKEFELLER, SENTAOR KENNEDY AND EX-SENATOR FULBRIGHT. ALTHOUGH AL-WALI DID NOT SPECIFY "OTHERS", IMPLICATION WAS THEY WERE BAATH PARTY MEMBERS. IN A CONVERSATION ON JULY 10 DR. ABDULLAH AL-SAYYAB, ADVISOR TO MINISTER OF OIL AND IRAQI REPRESENTATIVE ON GOVERNING BOARD OF OPEC, TOLD ME MUCH THE SAME THINN. IN COMMENTING ON WHY IT WAS PREMATURE FOR U.S.-IRAQI BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS ON OIL MATTERS A TECHNICAL LEVEL (STATE 102882), AL-SAYYAB SAID SUSPICION OF USG IS STILL WIDESPREAD AMONG "CERTAIN ELEMENTS" AND ANY SUCH DISCUSSIONS COULD BE MISINTERPRETED AS PRO-AMERICAN GESTURE. AL-SAYYAB CITED RECENT EXAMPLE OF U.S. OIL COMPANY EXECUTIVE WHO HAD OFFERED TO COME TO BAGHDAD TO PRESENT INOC 5,000 DOLS WORTH OF TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS. REACTION HAD BEEN TO INSIST HE MAIL THEM.

3. COMMERCIAL RELATIONS AND RECEPTION OF PROMINENT AMERICANS IS ONLY ONE ASPECT OF SADDAM HUSSEIN'S POLICIES THAT HAVE MET OPPOSITION. RAPPROCHEMENT WITH SAUDI ARABIA, JORDAN, IRAN AND OTHER "REACTIONARIES", DISPLACEMENT OF SOVIETS IN ECONOMIC FIELD BY WEST, AND MORE REALISTIC APPROACH TO ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT (BEXT EXEMPLIFIED BY SADAT VISIT AND ABSENCE OF CRITICISM OF EGYPT) ARE ALL PROBABLY BEING USED AGAINST HIM. OPPOSITION ELEMENTS FALL INTO THREE CATEGORIES: (A) ICP, SUPPORTED BY USSR, WHICH BELIEVES DRAMATIC EXPANSION OF WESTERN ECONOMIC PRESENCE AND DEVELOPING IRANIAN-IRAQI-SAUDI COOPERATION IN GULF ARE AIMED AT ELIMINATING SOVIETS FROM AREA; (B) MILITANT AND LESS SOPHISTICATED BAATHIS, WHO ARE PRODUCTS OF CLOSED SYSTEM AND RADICAL RHETORIC. THEY HAVE FOUND IT DIFFICULT TO DIGEST 180 DEGREE POLICY SHIFT

ON IRAN, RAPPROCHEMENT WITH "REACTIONARY" ARABS, AND PARTICULARLY WELCOMING OF AMERICANS WHOM THEY ARE STILL BEING TOLD ARE NO. 1 ENEMY. THEY ARE RECEPTIVE NO DOUBT TO ACCUSATIONS THAT SADDAM'S POLICIES ARE HYPOCRITICAL AND THAT HE IS SELLING OUT THE REVOLUTION; AND (C) PERHAPS MOST CONFIDENTIAL

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DANGEROUS GROUP IS HIGHER LEVEL PARTY FIGURES WHO MUST RESENT AND FEAR SADDAM'S SUCCESSES AND PREDOMINANCE. IDENTITY OF SUCH POTENTIAL ENEMIES IS DIFFICULT TO ESTABLISH AND THEIR EXISTENCE IS EVEIDENCED MAINLY BY INFERENCE FROM STATEMENTS AND ACTIONS OF SADDAM. THEY PROBABLY INCLUDE SOME MEMBERS OF PAN-ARAB PARTY LEADERSHIP, PERHAPS SOME FOLLOWERS OF LEFTIST IDEOLOGUE ABDUL KHALIQ AS-SAMMARAIIE (STILL UNDER HOUSE ARREST SINCE HIS IMPLICATION IN JUNE

30, 1973 ABORTIVE COUP), AND PERSONAL RIVALS FROM TIKRIT
MAFIA.

4. ABOVE GROUPS, EVEN ACTING IN CONCERT, ARE NOT BELIEVED
TO REPRESENT SERIOUS THREAT TO REGIME IN SHORT TERM AND IF
SADDAM CHOSE TO CRUSH THEM HE COULD PROBABLY DO SO IN SHORT
ORDER. PERHAPS FEARING SUCH A MOVE, WHICH WOULD BE
TRADITIONAL IRAQI METHOD OF DEALING WITH RIVALS, LARGE
PORTION OF ICP IS BELIEVED TO HAVE GONE UNDERGROUND WITHIN
PAST SIX MONTHS. SADDAM IS BELIEVED TO FEEL USE OF FORCE
WOULD RESULT IN RENEWAL OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND POLITICAL
INSTABILITY THAT COULD REDUCE LONGEVIETY OF HIS REGIME.
INSTEAD, HE APPEARS TO HAVE OPTED FOR POLICY OF PERSUASION,
GENTLE COERCION AND PAYOFFS. DURING PAST THREE MONTHS
SADDAM HAS MADE MAJOR EFFORT TO REASSURE THE MILITANTS AND
TO UNDERCUT ALLEGATIONS OF HIS ENEMIES. AMONG MORE SIG-
NIFICANT MOVES HAVE BEEN:

- (A) SADDAM'S MARCH VISIT TO MOSCOW (BAGHDAD 324 AND 409)
 - (B) SADDAM'S MAY VISIT TO FOUR EASTERN EUROPEAN COUNTRIES
(BAGHDAD 478)
 - (C) IRAQI-SOVIET ECONOMIC ACCORD OF MAY 28 (BAGHDAD 606)
 - (D) GOI ASSOCIATION WITH LIBYAN POSITION ON ME DURING
JALLOUD VISIT (BAGHDAD 656)
 - (E) SADDAM'S PEECH OF JUNE 7 ON CONTINUING IMPORTANCE OF
NATIONAL FRONT (BAGHDAD 665)
 - (F) SADDAM'S FAILURE TO RECEIVE SENATOR KENNEDY OR EX-
SENATOR FULBRIGHT DESPITE RECEPTION OF DAVID ROCKEFELLER
IN JANUARY (BAGHDAD 575)
 - (G) PUBLIC ASSOCIATION WITH REJECTIONIST FRONG DURING
HABASH VISIT (BAGHDAD 718)
 - (H) CONTINUING HARSH ANTI-AMERICAN PROPAGANDA
 - (I) ESCALATION OF EFFORTS TO UNDERMINE RIVAL BAATH REGIME
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- (J) IRAQ'S ACCORD OF JULY 4 ASSOCIATING ITSELF IN AS YET
UNSPECIFIED WAY WITH COMECON (BAGHDAD 741)
- (K) VP MAAROUF'S JULY VISIT TO CHINA AND NORTH KOREA.

5. ALL OF ABOVE ACTIONS ARE REMARKABLY SIMILAR TO POLICIES
ADOPTED DURING JUNE 1972 - MARCH 1973 "NATIONALIZATION
STRUGGLE" WHEN STRATEGIC ALLIANCE WITH SOVIET UNION WAS
PLAYED AS KEYSTONE OF IRAQI POLICY. HOWEVER, AS MOST OF
REFTELS POINT OUT, RECENT ACTIONS ARE EVEN MORE LACKING IN
SUBSTANCE THAN THOSE OF 1972-73.
CONCURRENTLY WITH ABOVE, SADDAM HAS TAKEN OTHER ACTIONS
THAT HAVE RECEIVED SCANT PUBLICITY BUT ARE OF SUBSTANCE AND
LONG RANGE SIGNIFICANCE, MOST NOTABLY THE CONCLUSION OF
TREATY WITH IRAN (BAGHDAD 642); JULY 2 BORDER ACCORD WITH
SAUDI ARABIA; JUNE 26 ECONOMIC ACCORDS WITH JORDAN;

IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH GULF STATES; AND CONTINUED EXPANSION OF ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH WEST. THERE IS THEREFORE NO REASON TO BELIEVE AT THIS TIME THAT SADDAM IS LETTING DOMESTIC OPPOSITION AND SOVIET DISPLEASURE DIVERT HIM FROM PURSUIT OF INDEPENDENT AND REALISTIC POLICIES DIRECTED AT ACHIEVING RAPPROCHEMENT WITH NEIGHBORS, RAPID ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND CREATING REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH IRAQ'S VITAL INTEREST WILL BE PROTECTED AND IT WILL BE CAPABLE OF PLAYING INFLUENTIAL ROLE.

6. SIGNIFICANCE FOR U.S.: IF ABOVE ANALYSIS IS CORRECT AND SADDAM HUSSEIN IS, IN FACT, IN DELICATE PERIOD OF TRYING TO DEAL WITH OPPOSITION WITHOUT JEOPARDIZING POSITIVE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF PAST YEAR, EARLY IMPROVEMENT OF RELATIONS WITH U.S. WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY BE POSTPONED. U.S. HAS BEEN CHIEF WHIPPING BOY FOR SO MANY YEARS THAT SADDAM HIMSELF MAY HAVE OVERESTIMATED HOW FAR HE COULD GO TOWARD THE U.S. AND WEST IN GENERAL BEFORE BEING ACCUSED OF HYPOCRISY AND SELLING OUT. IN ANY CASE, HE NOW APPEARS TO BE FOLLOWING LENIN'S STRATEGY OF "TWO STEPS FORWARD ONE STEP BACK". HOW FAR IT WILL GO AND HOW LONG IT WILL LAST REMAINS TO BE SEEN. IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING THAT PROGRESS TOWARD A SETTLEMENT COULD BE A CRUCIAL FACTOR AS FAR AS IRAQI ATTITUDES TOWARD U.S. ARE CONCERNED FOR THIS REMAINS THE MOST EMOTIONALLY-CHARGED ISSUE IN IRAQ AND SADDAM CANNOT ALLOW HIMSELF TO BECOME VULNERABLE ON IT.
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7. FOR TIME BEING I STRONGLY RECOMMEND AGAINST VISITS BY PROMINENT AMERICANS OR OTHER OVERT ACTIONS THAT COULD BE PERCEIVED HERE AS EXPRESSION OF U.S. PLEASURE WITH RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. THERE IS, HOWEVER, NO REASON WHY WE CANNOT CONTINUE COMMERCIAL BUSINESS AS USUAL. MORE THAN EVER BEFORE WE SHOULD CONCENTRATE ON THE SUBSTANCE OF IRAQI ACTIONS NOT THEIR RHETORIC.
LOWRIE

NOTE BY OCT: NOT PASSED ABOVE ADDRESSEES.

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